

Chapter 4 Community Services and Facilities

Vision

Talbot County provides services that effectively meet the County's changing needs and are consistent with planned land use patterns.

Through thoughtful planning and the integration of programs, valuable community services and facilities enhance the quality of life in Talbot County.

The County, in coordination with nonprofit organizations, in incorporated towns and designated growth areas, strives to provide affordable housing opportunities to meet local needs. Successful plans and an emphasis on strategic growth contribute to keeping housing costs affordable. The County has programs in place requiring that adequate facilities and services are maintained and are not overwhelmed by new development. The County employs methods that assure the cost of development is borne by the developer.

All County residents find ample opportunities for recreation and relaxation in our park system. The Department of Parks and Recreation is attentive to the needs of County residents and offers a wide variety of programs and well-maintained facilities.

Population centers have conveniently located neighborhood parks with amenities for family-oriented activities. Larger community parks are connected by a greenway network including walking and biking trails. Waterfront parks and many public landings provide access to our miles of Bay and river shoreline.

Goals

Provide an equitable and resilient system of public facilities and services including emergency services, police protection, schools, healthcare, social services, housing, libraries and other services that effectively meet community needs and are consistent with land use plans.

Develop policies, initiate and support programs, acquire funding and form strategic partnerships to help alleviate substandard housing conditions.

Provide opportunities to accommodate a variety of housing densities, types, sizes and costs to meet existing and future needs.

Maintain and enhance the system of parks and recreation facilities based upon residents' needs.

I. Introduction

The availability, affordability and quality of community services are important indicators of the County's quality of life. Planning for community facilities and services should take into account current community needs, as well as projected changes in both the needs of the community and anticipated growth. Community services and facilities are provided to Talbot County residents by local and state government, public/private ventures, and the private sector.

The demographic trend is an increase in the population of older and retired citizens, especially in the more distant and rural areas of the county. The towns of Easton and Trappe are expected to be the County's major growth areas in the coming years.

Demands for community services are changing along with demographic shifts. By 2030, the demand for schools and outdoor recreation may decrease, while the need for easily accessible services such as libraries, healthcare and emergency services are likely to increase.

County owned facilities are funded mainly through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Public schools are funded from local, state, federal and private revenue sources.

The community services and facilities discussed in this Plan element include: government offices, public safety, hazard mitigation, education, libraries, healthcare, social services, housing, parks and recreation, and solid waste management. Public sewer and water utilities are discussed separately in the Natural Resource Conservation chapter.

Countywide Community Service and Facility Policies

4.1 Public facilities and services intended to meet countywide needs should be centrally located.

Likewise, facilities and services intended to serve local community needs should be located within the community.

4.2 Public facilities and services should be scaled to the needs of the area they are designed to serve.

4.3 The County should seek regional solutions to providing community services or facilities when demonstrated to be cost effective. Rural areas of the County should be provided facilities and services which match rural needs. Planned growth areas around towns should be provided a level of facilities and services matched to needs that are more intensive.

4.4 County public facility and service improvements should be efficiently coordinated with capital improvements. All planned major public facilities shall be prioritized and scheduled as part of a Comprehensive Five Year Capital Improvements Program.

4.5 Wherever possible, existing County and town public facilities should be expanded rather than creating new facilities. The County should provide adequate space for various county offices and facilities.

4.6 New development projects should not be approved or built in areas of the County where infrastructure and services such as roads, sewer service or fire protection are not adequate to accommodate the increased demand. Exemptions to this policy may be considered in the event that a developer bears the cost to improve such facilities.

4.7 The costs of new or expanded community facilities and services should be equitably and proportionally shared by all those who will benefit from the improvements.

4.8 The County should seek State coordination to assist with the establishment of effective public facilities for new development.

II. County Office Facilities

The Town of Easton is the county seat of Talbot County. Most County departments and offices are located in Easton, as well as State agency offices serving the County.

As operations grew over the past few decades, services and facilities spread to locations throughout the town. Residents with business to conduct were forced to visit several locations to get things done. Separation of facilities also hindered coordination between agencies and departments.

To better integrate service, the County purchased and renovated the building at 215 Bay Street in Easton, in close proximity to the Courthouse and other agency offices. This facility is currently home to the Department of Planning and Zoning, the Office of Permits and Inspections, the Department of Public Works and the Office of Environmental Health.

Pending further renovations, the County Manager's Office and Administrative Services will remain in the Courthouse. The long-term plan is for the Courthouse to be dedicated primarily to matters of the courts.

III. Public Safety

A. Law Enforcement

a. Responsibility for law enforcement in the County is shared by the Talbot County Sheriff's Office, the Police Departments of Easton, St. Michaels, Oxford and Trappe, and the Maryland State Police.

The County constructed a Detention Center in 1992 with a maximum capacity of 132 inmates, designed to meet the needs of the County through the year 2018.

The Talbot County Community Service Program (TCCSP) was established in 1993 to offer sanctions other than incarceration, allowing participants to maintain family, job and community ties. Options for participants include performing community service, referral to addiction or substance abuse programs, GED programs, and counseling services.

b. The Office of the State's Attorney for Talbot County has five attorneys and seven administrative staff. Each attorney handles many types of cases, in both the District Court and the Circuit Court. Areas of responsibility include homicides, vehicular manslaughter, narcotics, child abuse, sex offenses, robbery and assaults, embezzlement, forgeries, and a Victim Witness program.

B. Emergency Services

1. Department of Emergency Services

The Department of Emergency Services has three divisions: the 9-1-1 Operations Center processes and dispatches emergency calls; Emergency Medical Services provides emergency care and medical transportation; and Emergency Management implements and coordinates responses to natural and man-made disasters.

Talbot County has a comprehensive road naming and property numbering program, a Geographic Information System (GIS) for dispatch and tracking emergency response, and a fully staffed operations center to effectively deliver emergency services.

Talbot County will maintain a consolidated 9-1-1 Operations Center to receive all 9-1-1 emergency calls for assistance in Talbot County, dispatch law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services, and monitor and appropriately issue alerts for developing local and regional emergency situations as well as state or national major emergency situations.

The emergency services department oversees the emergency management program, emergency medical services, emergency communications, and other appropriate emergency services as designated by the County Council. Talbot County will maintain an emergency medical service response system designed to deliver advanced life support services for medical emergencies to the community.

Talbot County has an effective emergency management division, with detailed hazard mitigation, evacuation and emergency plans and operations. The County will continue to maintain and update the Talbot County Emergency Operations Plan which exists to provide for continuity of government, the assignment of operational responsibilities, operational coordination, issuance of public alerts, and the coordination of evacuation and sheltering. Coordination and evacuation planning will continue with local and State transportation officials, law enforcement, and other appropriate agencies and organizations to alert and facilitate the movement of threatened populations.

2. Volunteer Fire Companies

Fire, rescue, ambulance and emergency medical services are provided by the seven volunteer fire companies within the County. Volunteer fire companies are located in Queen Anne, Cordova, Easton, Oxford, Trappe, St. Michaels and Tilghman. Volunteer companies receive funding support from the State, County and towns, in addition to private donations and fund raising activities. Advanced Life Support (ALS) services have been established to provide 24 hour emergency response by trained paramedics and cardiac rescue technicians. ALS services are provided by volunteer and paid staff.

Fire companies are challenged to raise funds to update and improve the equipment needed to respond to an ever growing number of calls. Many companies also have difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers, though the need for fire, rescue, ambulance and emergency medical services has steadily increased.

Public Safety Policies

4.9 The County will continue to provide effective and efficient emergency services through a unified emergency services system using national and state regulations, standards, and guidelines to evaluate system performance and make system improvements.

IV. Hazard Mitigation

Hazard mitigation is a key element of community resilience.

A Resilient Community is one that is able to anticipate risk, limit impact, and bounce back rapidly through survival, adaptability, evolution, and growth in the face of change.

Resilience is achieved by identifying and investing in the foundational pillars that support the community. These include public safety, health and welfare, infrastructure protection, education, economic stability, and environmental protection.

Hazard mitigation planning is the foundation for a long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. As an incentive for State and local governments to develop plans, the Federal government requires mitigation planning as a condition of eligibility for hazard mitigation project funding.

A. Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Talbot County Council and the governments of the incorporated towns have adopted the *2011 Hazard Mitigation Plan* for the County. The purpose of the plan is to review, assess and update area vulnerabilities to natural hazards and prepare a long-term strategy to address them.

The Plan is Talbot County's road map to evaluating hazards, identifying resources and capabilities, selecting appropriate actions, and implementing mitigation measures to eliminate or reduce future damage from those hazards.

The highest hazard risks identified in the plan were winter storms, mass power outages, flash floods, tropical storms, shore erosion, extreme heat and wildfires. Other hazards ranging from extreme cold to drought were identified as having a high impact but were considered to occur less frequently.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan lists and prioritizes mitigation projects and contains information on responsible organizations, estimated costs, possible funding sources, and timeline for implementation. It also outlines the steps necessary to implement the mitigation strategies. These projects contribute to a larger goal of improving community resilience — that is the sustained ability to respond to, withstand and recover from adverse situations such as natural disasters.

Following are priorities for implementation from the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

1. Establish the Talbot County Community Center as a State Mass Care Shelter for approximately 3,000 residents/evacuees, or to shelter evacuees transiting through the County if evacuation routes were closed. *Plans and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) have been developed between the County and the State allowing the community center to be used as an emergency shelter for the Upper Shore region, and these documents are reviewed on an annual basis.*
2. Develop an enhanced flood warning system, to include the use of GIS and loss estimation software in the development of flood stage forecast maps, flood depth maps and images of vulnerable structures, linked to parcels and flood stage maps.
3. Identify areas of concern throughout the County that experience repetitive flooding and/or flood related issues.
4. Maintain and enhance the Community Rating System (CRS) Program to reduce flood insurance costs in Talbot County. *Talbot County obtained CRS certification in October, 2014 and plans to continue to enhance its rating by implementing additional measures.*
5. Develop a system for recording and storing elevation certificates and first-floor elevation data using County GIS and database technology. *Elevation Certificates are now available online from Talbot County's website.*
6. Develop specifications for backup generators and fuel tanks to provide the municipalities, County and village community facilities with a continuous source of electrical power.
7. Resolve flooding issues on Route 33 that have caused parts St. Michaels and Tilghman Island to be cut off.
8. Conduct a detailed structural assessment for the buildings in the floodplain in St. Michaels to determine appropriate mitigation measures to reduce low level repetitive flooding.

9. Construct upgrades to the Oxford WWTP related to the facility and pre-draining to help mitigate flooding issues. *The Town of Oxford is proceeding through the development process for plant upgrades and the Town and County are cooperating on stormwater management improvements in the vicinity.*
10. Replace three existing culverts with bottomless culverts in the Dutchmans Lane vicinity. *A bottomless culvert has been constructed and other stormwater management projects are planned.*
11. Restore barrier islands for wave action protection to County coastlines.

B. Coastal and Climate Hazards

Past Comprehensive Plans have not adequately addressed the threat of coastal storms, sea-level rise, and the necessity of building resilience in the face of changing conditions. In the Vision Statement for the present Comprehensive Plan, the primary goals are to “preserve the quality of life and rural character of Talbot County while protecting the health, safety and well-being of its citizens.” With increasing evidence of sea level rise, and projections of stronger storms in a warming climate, the implications for the low lying Eastern Shore are clear.

1. Sea Level Rise Projections

A rise in Maryland’s average temperature over the last century has been documented from published records. Sea level rise of one foot in the past 100 years has been recorded in Baltimore Harbor, as summarized in Chart 4.1. A recent update of sea level rise projections by the Scientific and Technical Working Group of the Maryland Climate Change Commission (Boesch et al., 2013) revealed two issues of concern:

First, the rate of sea-level rise in the Chesapeake Bay area is twice the average rate of rise over the rest of the globe. Primary reasons given for this elevated rate are: (1) the land is subsiding as a result of land adjustment after the last ice age; and (2) large amounts of water are being drawn from the aquifers to supply the needs of communities, especially on the Eastern Shore.

Secondly, there is that evidence that this rate sea level rise is accelerating. The Scientific and Technical Working Group projects that, by 2050, sea level in Chesapeake Bay will increase between 0.6ft and, 1.6ft, with a best estimate of 0.9ft. Although projections beyond 2050 have greater uncertainty, estimates of sea level rise by 2100 range from 2.1ft to 5.7ft, with a 3.7ft rise as the most likely scenario.

These changes will impact human health, the built environment, agriculture, natural resources, and water resources in the County. The fact that areas of MD 33 from Sherwood through Royal Oak could be impacted by sea-level rise, or that Oxford, St Michaels, Tilghman and many other waterfront communities will likely be affected by the increasing frequency of Category 1 storm surges, requires planning in light of evidence which indicates that these events are likely to happen. Whether coastal flooding occurs through a slow sea level rise or from hurricanes and nor’easters, the potential for property damage in Talbot County with its long shoreline exposure cannot be underestimated.

Detailed analysis of trends and prediction of future conditions for the County and State can be found at Climatechange.Maryland.gov, including an interactive map of climate change impact areas.

2. Strategies

Strategies to respond to sea level rise and increasing storm frequency should include evacuation and refuge, construction, and engineering. Hazard mitigation planning can address certain events: those that are likely to occur, have a limited duration and a variable intensity, and can be life threatening. Emergency cooling or warming centers, proactive communications and warnings, evacuation routes and shelters to help residents are planned.

Other strategies can help to reduce property damage and break a cycle of repeated losses and reconstruction. As of 2014, almost 2,000 properties in special flood hazard areas were covered by National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) policies, representing over \$500 million in property coverage. Talbot County has achieved acceptance into the NFIP Community Rating System (CRS), which recognizes floodplain management efforts with flood insurance policy discounts for businesses and homeowners. CRS goals are to reduce future flood losses, avoid economic disruption and human suffering and promote awareness of the need for flood insurance.

In addition to buildings, infrastructure such as drinking water supplies, roads and other elements may be threatened by even short term inundation from a single weather event. Enhancement of wetlands and riparian buffers, infrastructure improvements, and improving the resilience of utilities and services can all anticipate these occurrences, arrest loss cycles and protect against additional losses. Identifying trouble spots is the first step to mitigating damage.

Other existing, regional plans addressed in the Natural Resources chapter of this plan will help address impacts to the environment. Critical Area regulations, Bay TMDL strategies, habitat restoration plans, agricultural best management practices, etc. can all play a part in impeding a documented rise in water temperature and pH, the migration of invasive species and plant diseases from more tropical regions and the loss of some migratory species. Though these conditions are not hazards, the character of Talbot County would be diminished if trends continue unabated.

3. Community Resilience

The five pillars of community resilience in Talbot County are:

1. Health, Safety, and Welfare
2. Economic Stability
3. Infrastructure
4. Education
5. Environment and Shoreline Protection

These pillars have been introduced into the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan as general guidance. It is the County's intent to use the five pillars to direct capital projects, form working groups, and secure grant funding in the future. Community resilience cannot be supported by only one or several of the pillars; to be a truly resilient community in the face of emergencies of all sorts, it is the belief of Talbot County that we must invest in all pillars equally.

Hazard Mitigation Policies

4.10 Talbot County shall research and implement plans to improve County resilience in the face of coastal and climate hazards and other threats to the foundation of our County such as public safety, health, and welfare, the economy, education, the infrastructure, and the environment.

4-11 Talbot County will maintain an emergency management program as part of the federal, State, local, and private sector emergency management network to identify and recommend ways to mitigate hazards, effectively plan for response to major emergencies, monitor and appropriately issue public alerts, and coordinate evacuation, response and recovery operations.

V. Education

A. Primary

The Talbot County Public School System is operated by the Talbot County Board of Education. System facilities consist of five elementary schools, one middle school, one combined middle/high school and one high school, located in nine buildings.

In recent years more than 50% of the County budget has been devoted to public education; education represented over 64% of the Public School's Fiscal 2015 budget. Despite the County's fifth place ranking for local per pupil expenditures (\$8,083), it is the lowest ranked for total per pupil revenues (\$12,636). This is due to a per pupil contribution by the State (\$3,799) which is the second lowest percentage of all counties.

The 2015 *Talbot County Public Schools Educational Facilities Master Plan* projects a relatively steady school population. The number of students enrolled in 2014 was 4,372. In 2015 it was expected to rise slightly to 4,470. Projections for 2024 estimate a student population of 4,530.

The Talbot County public school system has adequate existing capacity on a County-wide basis to accommodate projected enrollment for the next ten years. However, facility utilization has shifted to relieve conditions at Easton Elementary schools which are at over 90% of capacity. Presently Easton High School is reported to be at 84% of capacity, while St. Michaels combined middle and high schools are at 69% following major renovations.

By 2021, schools expected to be enrolled at over 90% of capacity are White Marsh Elementary, Easton Middle School and Easton High School. Enrollment at Tilghman Elementary is projected to decline to 51.6% of capacity. Declines are also expected at Chapel Elementary (78.7%) and St Michaels Elementary (76.4%).

Nine private schools also enroll students from within and outside the County, including five which enroll only nursery school ages. The non-public schools include:

- The Country School (accommodates grades kindergarten through eight);
- St. Peter and St. Paul's School (accommodates grades kindergarten through twelve);
- The Chesapeake Christian School (accommodates grades kindergarten through twelve).

In 2014, total private school enrollment was 1,121 students. A significant number of students at some schools may be drawn from outside the County

Home instruction for K-12 students increased to 2.2% of County enrollment, from a reported 1.5% in 2008. Just over 33% of home instruction students were supervised by the Talbot County Schools in the 2014 academic year,

B. Secondary

Chesapeake College is a two-year community college located in Wye Mills and supported in part by the five Midshore counties. It offers 17 transfer and 20 career Associate Degree programs, including science and technology, liberal arts, education and various specialties of allied health.

The college had a fall 2013 full time enrollment of 2,572. Twenty four percent of enrollees were from Talbot County. There have also been over 17,000 registrations in non-credit continuing education courses, many related to aspects of the manufacturing and hospitality industries.

Salisbury University and Washington College are each located within an hour of the County. Salisbury University is part of the University System of Maryland, and offers 43 undergraduate and 14 graduate degree programs. Washington College is a private institution offering 40 majors and academic programs at the undergraduate level.

C. Library Services

The Talbot County Free Library provides comprehensive library services to the public from its main library in Easton and the St. Michaels branch. Library initiatives and programs include small business and veterans' assistance, basic computer literacy, job seeking assistance, and an early literacy center. The library has sponsored a community conversations program, interviewing and recording the oral histories from community members. It has also partnered with the Maryland Humanities Council on their 'One Maryland, One Book' and 'Let's Be Shore' programs. In the 2014 fiscal year, the library held over 700 programs (66% for children) with a total attendance of 15,704.

The main library building has recently been renovated and expanded to a 28,000 square foot, energy-efficient structure, featuring two meeting rooms and an expanded audio-visual collection. There is also a separate children's wing and an improved Maryland Room dedicated to historical, genealogical and archival materials. The library has over 27,000 cardholders and 49 public access internet computers.

The library system is funded 75% by Talbot County while the State of Maryland contributes 18%. Public funds are used primarily for staff salaries, acquisitions, supplies, and routine maintenance. There are 91 volunteers who work with the library, who in the last fiscal year contributed more than 8,000 hours of service.

Education Policies

4. 12 Talbot County will support a full spectrum of educational resources and programs in support of a prosperous and skilled community.

VI. Healthcare and Social Services

A. Hospital

Memorial Hospital in Easton has been the primary medical and healthcare provider in Talbot County and the Mid-Shore region for over 100 years. Memorial Hospital offers a full range of inpatient and outpatient care services. It has 140 licensed beds and an Emergency Department designed to accommodate 60,000 visits a year. Additional outpatient centers for primary care, diagnostics, treatment, education, and rehabilitation are located throughout the Mid-Shore.

Shore Health System was formed in 1996 through the affiliation of two community hospitals: Memorial Hospital in Easton and Dorchester General Hospital, located in the city of Cambridge. In 2006, Shore Health System merged with the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) to enhance clinical programs and facilities, and to facilitate physician recruitment. Subsequently, Shore Health Systems began to seek a site for a new regional medical facility. With the encouragement and assistance of Talbot County and the Town of Easton, Shore Health Systems selected a site north of Easton and adjacent to the County Community Center. Over 225 acres were annexed into the Town in order to provide public utilities for a complete medical campus.

The Shore Regional Health Medical Center facilities on the Eastern Shore were combined in 2013 to form University of Maryland Shore Medical Center (UMSMC). The University of Maryland Shore Medical Center took possession of the parcels in October, 2015, setting in motion a schedule to improve the site. Under the terms of the hospital property settlement, UMMS will commence planning and design of an acute care hospital within 5 years. If construction is not substantially completed within 15 years, the County has the legal authority to require the hospital to convey the property back to the County.

The University of Maryland Shore Center at Easton currently employs over 1,900 people, including a medical staff of over 200 attending, consulting and associate staff members, and a corps of over 500 volunteers.

The healthcare industry in Talbot County accounted for all growth in the education and health services sector between 2005 and 2011. Employment expanded by 436 jobs or 14.3 percent in this period, supported in large measure by the presence of Shore Health System.

B. Community Health and Assistance

The County Health Department is the local agency of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The department provides all County residents with a wide array of family health programs and services. Program areas include adult health and family services, clinical services, developmental disabilities and veteran's services. Areas of concern include communicable disease control services including immunizations, monitoring the spread of diseases, and testing and treatment for tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS.

C. Environmental Health

The Office of Environmental Health is responsible for the enforcement of State regulations as delegated by the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Services include septic system and well site inspections, licensure and inspection of restaurants, seafood operations and other food processing facilities, outdoor air quality monitoring, and rabies surveillance and control.

The Office works in cooperation with the County Department of Planning and Zoning on approval and inspection of septic systems and regulation of conditions in trailer parks, foster homes, labor camps and day care facilities.

D. Special Needs Populations

Special needs populations include low income residents, the elderly, disabled residents and the homeless.

1. Social Services

The Department of Social Services is an agency of the State of Maryland, and is located at 301 Bay Street in Easton. The office provides a wide variety services, including adult protective services and social services, child and family support services, medical and in-home assistance and the SNAP (food stamp) program.

In the last reporting year (2009), the agency dispersed over \$2.7 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) assistance and more than \$2 million in foster care payments.

2. Senior Services

Upper Shore Aging, Inc. operates the Talbot County Senior Center in Easton, providing a range of onsite and home-based services.

The facility houses rooms for exercise and fitness, wellness, education, crafts, and games. It has a media room and dining room. The Senior Information and Assistance service provides information about services, Medicare and Medicaid application assistance and referrals to other agencies.

The Senior Center also manages the Meals on Wheels program that delivered 17,126 meals to Talbot County residents in fiscal year 2013 and more than 19,000 in 2014. The Center served residents 3,940 congregate meals in its dining room in fiscal year 2013 and anticipates an increase of 1,000 meals in 2014.

Hambleton Village in St. Michaels is a 24 unit development owned and operated by the Upper Shore Aging Housing Corporation, serving low-income elderly residents.

3. Homeless Services

The Neighborhood Services Center (NSC) in Easton has operated a transitional homeless shelter since 1991. The NSC's Ridgeway House provides customers with case management, life skills training, job search information, budgeting, resume building and basic computer skills. The facility can shelter up to six adults (3 females and 3 males) for 30 days. Stays may be extended for residents who are close to achieving self-sufficiency.

The Talbot Interfaith Shelter (TIS) was established in 2009 to provide safe, temporary shelter to those who lack adequate housing and to raise awareness for the issues of homelessness. Until 2014, TIS provided shelter to a modest number of persons through the winter season in one of a consortium of area religious facilities.

More recently, TIS has worked to better address their clients' needs by acquiring and establishing a permanent shelter in the Town of Easton for homeless families and individuals. The six-bedroom, six-bath building is designed to house and feed up to 12 people in an easily accessible, well-maintained and secure environment. The organization has developed a strategic plan to provide a range of integrated services and to that end they have hired part-time staff and developed partnerships with other community organizations.

4. Mental Health Services

In addition to the Talbot County Department of Health, mental health services are accessible through Veterans Outpatient Clinics, a Talbot County Program for Public School Students, and the Memory Center of Bayleigh Chase (formerly William Hill Manor).

The Mental Health Association in Talbot County (MHATC) is a non-profit organization that promotes mental wellness and behavioral health with education and advocacy. Programs include Mental Health First Aid, a training program that teaches the signs and symptoms of mental disorders and provides tools to respond to a psychiatric crisis; the Kids on the Block Puppet Troupe, staging interactive performances to children on such topics as problem solving, feelings and school safety; and a distinguished speakers program.

5. Substance Abuse Services

Talbot Partnership is dedicated to motivating the community on issues pertaining to substance abuse prevention. The Partnership envisions a community free of the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs where youth and adults lead healthy, safe and productive lives.

Since its inception in 1991, Talbot Partnership has developed programs and activities such as Guiding Good Choices, Safe Homes, drug-free workplace training, Teen Court, Youth Coalition and First Night Talbot. The organization is supported in part by the Talbot County Council.

The 2013 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), part of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), found alcohol use, the most frequently abused substance by teens, decreased by 25% for 12th graders and 18% for 10th graders, compared to data from 2007.

In the same report, marijuana use by high school seniors declined by 33% while 10th graders use remained nearly the same as in 2007. Cigarettes use by both 12th and 10th graders decreased 39% from the 2007, though the use of smokeless tobacco by 10th graders more than doubled.

Heroin abuse was reported on the rise in Talbot County and throughout the state. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug that can be injected, inhaled by snorting or sniffing, or smoked. It is easy to overdose on heroin. The YRBS survey queried whether teens had ever used heroin and found reported abuse by 12th graders increased by 41% and 10th graders rose by 70% compared to 2007.

Talbot County Sheriff's Office regards heroin and opiate addiction a community health issue as well as a criminal matter. Deputies are trained in the use of Narcan, a heroin overdose-reversing medication. Drug addiction is seen as an element of many crimes the Sheriff investigates.

Talbot County Narcotics Task Force is comprised of the County Sheriff's Office, the Maryland State Police, the St. Michael's Police Department, the Easton Police Department, the Trappe Police

Department and the Oxford Police Department. The Task Force conducts investigations into the importation and distribution of wholesale quantities of marijuana and heroin into the Talbot County area.

Substance Abuse Services in Talbot County include:

- Eastern Shore Crisis Response and Resource Helpline
- Eastern Shore Psychological Services
- Talbot County Health Department
- Talbot Partnership
- Talbot Tip Line 410-820-4003
- Talbot County Liquor Inspector
- Talbot Parent Coalition

Healthcare and Social Service Policies

4. 13 Talbot County shall continue to support its healthcare and social service agencies in order to maintain and improve community resilience and foster community health.

VII. Housing

A. Workforce Housing

Some current or prospective County residents who are fully employed have difficulty obtaining housing to meet their needs due to a shortage of safe, affordably priced rental or for-purchase housing. Local housing costs may exceed the incomes of workers in instances of limited housing supply or strong competition that drives up purchase prices. Challenges also include difficulty in obtaining financing.

Early in 2015, the Talbot County Council appointed the first Affordable and Workforce Housing Commission as an advisory body to explore the availability of affordable and workforce housing in Talbot County. The Commission is to offer insight and guidance to the Council on development of affordable and workforce housing initiatives, programs, funding and/or legislation.

In April, 2015 the Affordable and Workforce Housing Commission presented their initial research findings and recommendations to the County Council. The Commission found that addressing housing needs requires ongoing assessment, monitoring, planning, development and implementation across county and municipal lines. They made the following recommendations, presented in order of priority.

1. Establish definitions for affordable and workforce housing in Talbot County, based on actual wages, housing costs and needs.
2. Incorporate ongoing assessment of the housing inventory, community resources and best practices as a part of the County's commitment to affordable workforce housing.

3. Evaluate institutional barriers which may impede opportunities for affordable rentals and/or home ownership and build relationships with housing developers, service agencies and nonprofits to create housing opportunities.
4. Engage in education and public awareness campaigns to educate the public about the community-wide benefits of affordable workforce housing, inform consumers about affordable housing choices and resources and promote living and working in Talbot County.
5. Create and preserve affordable workforce housing opportunities by encouraging land banking, renovation, participation in State and Federal grant programs and creating zoning and development incentives for the construction of workforce housing.

Comprehensive Plan policies favor new development in Population Centers where the availability of public services enables homes to be built at a lower cost and on smaller parcels.

B. Affordable Housing

Providing affordable housing opportunities for lower income families is important to the long term economic and social vitality of Talbot County.

Families who pay more than 30% of their household income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. This is in contrast to the assumed income range for workforce housing, because household income could be in the form of social security or disability income, which are well below average employee wages.

The location of housing – its proximity to jobs, childcare, stores and services and whether or not these are accessible by car, transit, or walking – also has a significant impact on the cost of living and therefore affordability.

The towns of Easton and Trappe have adopted policies permitting a mix of housing types and price ranges to meet the needs of families with below median incomes.

Habitat for Humanity Choptank, headquartered in the Town of Trappe, is the local affiliate of the global organization. Habitat Choptank provides home ownership opportunities for lower income residents with construction, financing and educational assistance. Since 1992, the organization has given 55 low-income families in Easton, St. Michaels and Cordova the opportunity to purchase a home with an affordable mortgage.

C. Assisted Housing

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) serves the housing needs of people with limited incomes, the elderly and the handicapped in Talbot County and all state jurisdictions. The agency provides mortgage financing for single and multi-family housing, finances home and energy conservation improvements to existing homes and administers Federal rent subsidies.

The DHCD Special Loan Program provides low or no interest loans to moderate and low income landowners and landlords for home rehabilitation and lead paint risk reduction activity. Talbot County's Department of Planning and Zoning is available to assist DHCD and applicants with applications.

The USDA Office of Rural Development provides funding for low and moderate-income housing to families and the elderly, as well as loans and/or grants for repairs.

There are currently seven USDA Rural Development Multi-Family Housing projects serving low to moderate income tenants in county. Easton hosts six developments offering 178 subsidized units: ; Jowite Apartments, Mulberry Hill Apartments, Parkway Apartments, Quail Meadows I and II, and St. Marks Village. St. Michaels Apartments offers 19 subsidized units in the Town.

There are 140 public housing units in Talbot County – 65 in the Town of Easton and 75 in the Town of St. Michaels. These units are operated by the Housing Commission of Talbot County, which merged with the St Michaels Housing Authority in 2011. At the time of this 2015 update, there is an extensive waiting list for low-income families wishing to move into these units.

In 1987 and 2002, the County initiated studies of substandard housing. The 1987 study focused on housing problems of the elderly and disabled. The 2002 study found that between 1987 and 2002, Talbot County had significantly reduced its stock of substandard housing in the unincorporated areas of the County. As of 2002, only 148 housing units were considered to be substandard and of those just 24 were occupied. In 1989 the County adopted a Minimum Livability Code to enhance enforcement of housing code violations.

Housing Policies

4.14 In areas with public sewer and adequate infrastructure, the County encourages the development of a variety of housing types, styles and designs. Existing housing stock should be maintained, conserved and improved to support social and economic diversity within the community. Single accessory apartments or cottages should be permitted in agricultural or rural residential districts of the County.

4.15 The County should undertake an inventory of public and private sources of funding and make results available to those who are interested in State and Federal programs for rehabilitation or replacement of substandard housing in unincorporated areas of the County.

4.16 The County should seek means to provide affordable ‘workforce’ housing for low and middle income families, including consideration of a County Housing Authority, and should also study of the feasibility of establishing a Housing Trust Fund.

4.17 The County should explore opportunities to work with investors and home owners to address housing demand. Incentives should be provided to encourage the development of new affordable housing and to encourage restoration and rehabilitation of existing housing.

4.18 The County should develop a wide range of tools and methods to insure an adequate supply of affordable housing in new developments. The County should review zoning, subdivision and development regulations to ensure that regulations do not create barriers to affordable and workforce housing.

4.19 The County should encourage the incorporated towns to require construction of a share of moderately priced housing units in new development and investigate other alternative methods to maintain affordable housing.

4.20 Manufactured or modular housing should remain among the options to supply affordable housing, provided such construction meets development, health and safety standards.

4.21 The county will request that the Affordable and Workforce Housing Commission, with Planning Department support, reconvene to gather information concerning government agencies and nonprofits that could provide expertise and data, and gather information about what other localities have done to successfully address the need for affordable and workforce housing, while protecting and preserving our unique area and quality of life.

4.22 The County should monitor the adequacy of existing homeless services in the County.

4.23 To ensure that affordable housing is practical and suitable, it should be located in close proximity, and with easy access to employment opportunities, social and health services, schools, food markets and other resources affecting the cost of living.

VIII. Parks and Recreation

The Talbot County Department of Parks and Recreation provides residents with a variety of recreational opportunities, from public landings for boating and fishing to ball fields. A Community Center offers ice skating and provides space for public and community events.

The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible not only for recreational facilities and activities at County facilities; it also works to coordinate activities between the County and Towns. The Department also oversees the State funded School Community Centers program.

The Department is assisted by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, which is appointed by the County Council and includes representatives from both the County and the incorporated towns. The Board provides plans and policy recommendations to the County Council and the Parks Department on land acquisition, administration, planning and policy direction for the Community Center, annual reports and budget requests.

Long range plans for Department of Parks and Recreation are outlined in the Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), which is required by the State of Maryland as a basis for Program Open Space funding. The LPPRP includes detailed assessment of Talbot County recreational facilities and programs and an accounting of publicly available recreation and open space. The LPPRP is regularly updated and contains comprehensive recommendations for maintaining and improving the County's recreational facilities.

The Department of Parks and Recreation is committed to developing facilities and programs to accommodate the needs of a growing population. Over the years, increased leisure time, a rise in the standard of living and a growing senior population have driven the demand for a changing mix of recreational sites and activities.

A. Park Facilities

There are several types of recreational facilities within Talbot County: State parks, County parks, community parks and neighborhood recreational areas, in addition to special parks and private recreational facilities.

1. County Parks

a. Recreation

The largest improved public recreational facilities serving County residents are Hog Neck Golf Course and the Talbot County Community Center. The 27-hole public Golf Course includes a driving range, clubhouse, and picnic area. The Community Center provides indoor facilities for ice skating and ice hockey and several rentable meeting rooms. The Community Center also features lighted outdoor baseball, lacrosse and soccer fields.

The County also supports 18 community parks that primarily serve residents within a five mile radius. These parks are often located adjacent to or near school facilities. Many community parks are under 25 acres and support field games, court games, and playground apparatus.

There are also 16 neighborhood parks ranging in size from one to five acres, designed to serve residents within a one or two mile radius. Neighborhood parks support active recreational activities with features such as playgrounds, playing fields and organized games, as well as passive recreation

In recent years, the County has acquired two larger properties dedicated to passive recreation and open space protection; Lewistown Park, outside Queen Anne, and Boone Creek, outside Oxford. Passive recreation, habitat and conservation improvements, and other public amenities are planned for these former farmland sites.

b. Water-oriented facilities

The County operates twenty seven public landings featuring boat ramps, mooring facilities, fishing and crabbing piers, picnic areas and parking facilities. Most facilities occupy small land areas with limited parking capacity. The Department has an ongoing targeted improvement program that has upgraded several public access facilities in the past few years.

One hundred thirty slips are available at County landings, over 90% of which are reserved for use by watermen with commercial licenses. The slips range from the Wye Landing at the north end of Talbot County to Neavitt, Bellevue and Tilghman locations to the south and west. Seafood catches are also unloaded at the public landings without dock facilities. There are DNR-recognized buy stations at various landings throughout the county. Locations of all public landings are identified on Map 1 (the following page).

2. Public/Private Parks

Other recreational opportunities in the County include natural areas, quasi-public facilities and historic and cultural areas owned and managed by nonprofit organizations, which are an important part of Talbot's spectrum of recreational opportunities.

Major quasi-public facilities in Talbot County include Pickering Creek Audubon Center, the Easton Club and Martingham Golf Courses, and conservation lands of the Maryland Ornithological Society, Izaak Walton League, Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, Nature Conservancy and Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

The public and quasi-public parks of Talbot County are supplemented by 1,264 acres of private parks and recreational areas. Private parks contain a full range of passive and active recreational facilities and range in size from small community clubs to large country clubs and golf courses.

B. Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan

Talbot County's 2013 LPPRP is consistent with the overall vision and goals of the County Comprehensive Plan. Many of the LPPRP's goals, policies, and strategies are reflected in the Plan and LPPRP recommendations related to land preservation support the overall goals of this Plan.

Park and Recreation Policies

4.24 The County should continue to support the development, operation and funding of indoor and outdoor recreational programs for County residents.

4.25 The County should work to add additional properties when opportunities present themselves and continue to retain, maintain and improve existing facilities that provide access to public waters for Talbot County watermen and recreational users.

4.26 The County should further develop the existing system of walking and cycling trails in areas where safety can be assured. Trail development shall not occur without consideration of property or privacy rights or conflicting uses.

4.27 The County should explore the feasibility of developing public and private greenways and linear parks in appropriate areas.

4.28 The County should provide information that identifies park locations and facilities to ensure that as many citizens as possible are aware of the active and passive recreational and open space opportunities available.

4.29 The County should encourage developers to provide recreational space in new residential developments. Standards for provision of open space shall not permit golf course facilities or stormwater management areas to satisfy recreational space requirements.

IX. Solid Waste Management

Talbot, Caroline, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties currently utilize the Midshore II Regional Landfill in Caroline County. The previous site was located outside Easton and is now used as a transfer station, recycling center and homeowner drop-off facility.

Municipal waste collection is a public utility in the town of Easton. All other communities, rural residential areas and non-residential users contract for private services.

The Maryland Recycling Act of 1988 requires that each county recycle at least 15 percent of its solid waste. Talbot County meets that target through voluntary programs. Recyclable materials are delivered to collection sites throughout the county.

X. Summary

Talbot County provides a range of community services, both directly through county facilities and through cooperation with the State and other agencies. The goal of all community services is to provide an equitable and resilient system that effectively meets community needs and is consistent with the County's other plans and goals.

The County is supported by enterprises that help sustain the economic, environmental and social fabric of the community through bad and good times. Such pillars of support include the public safety, health and educational agencies discussed in this chapter. Other foundational elements are discussed in other chapters, including land use planning, infrastructure and utilities, natural resources, and economic development.

The ability to adapt to changing situations is one attribute of providing effective community services. Whether in emergency services, housing or recreation, it is necessary to make ongoing assessments of conditions, threats and alternative strategies. Talbot County's community services are an integral component to sustaining its traditional quality of life.